

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 AID-05 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00

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R 130935Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6885

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L VALLETTA 0810

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP, PFOR, MT, IS

SUBJ: ISRAEL'S AMBASSADOR TO MALTA RETIRING

1. AFTER ALMOST SIX LONG AND DIFFICULT YEARS IN MALTA, ISRAELI AMBASSADOR ITZHAK BENYACOV HOPES TO LEAVE WITHIN A FEW WEEKS FOR A LONG LEAVE AND RETIREMENT IN ISRAEL. HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER HAVE ALREADY DEPARTED, AND BENYACOV IS BEING DELAYED ONLY BY PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF'S UNWILLINGNESS THUS FAR TO APPROVE THE REQUEST FOR AGREEMENT FOR HIS SUCCESSOR WHICH WAS SUBMITTED ON APRIL 27. BENYACOV HOPES, BUT IS NOT AT ALL CERTAIN, THAT APPROVAL WILL BE GRANTED SHORTLY AND NOT DELAYED UNTIL AFTER THE 1976 MALTESE GENERAL ELECTION, THE DATE FOR WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN SET.

2. BENYACOV IS WEARY, DISCOURAGE AND UNDERSTANDABLY ANXIOUS TO LEAVE. HIS TOUR HERE HAS BEEN MARKED BY A STEADY DETERIORATION IN OFFICIAL MALTESE-ISRAELI RELATIONS AS MINTOFF MOVED STEP BY STEP TOWARDS HIS PRESENTLY CLOSE AND EFFUSIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH QADHAFI. BENYACOV HAS NOT SEEN MINTOFF IN ALMOST TWO YEARS,
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ALTHOUGH HE HAS MANAGED TO RETAIN GOOD PERSONAL RELATIONS

WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER SENIOR GOM OFFICIALS. INCREASINGLY, HOWEVER, HE HAS FELT ISOLATED AND CUT OFF FROM FORMERLY CLOSE MALTESE LABOR PARTY CONTACTS WHO HAVE OBVIOUSLY TAKEN THEIR CUE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER. AT THE SAME TIME, THE PRO-MINTOFF PRESS IS FULL OF LAVISH PRAISE OR QADHAFI AND THE LIBYAN CONNECTION, AND QADHAFI'S PICUTRE IS PLASTERED ON WALLS THROUGHOUT THE ISLAND. THE LIBYAN, KUWAITI AND EGYPTIAN MISSIONS ARE VERY ACTIVE HERE, AND BENYACOV HAS IN RECENT YEARS MAINTAINED A VERY LOW PROFILE.

3. COMMENT: AMBASSADOR BENYACOV IS PERSONALLY POPULAR AND WELL-REGARDED IN BOTH THE MALTESE AND FOREIGN COMMUNITY HERE. AN ABLE, VETERAN CAREER DIPLOMAT AND FORMER INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, HE HAS BEEN QUIETLY EFFECTIVE DESPITE MINTOFF'S TIES WITH THE LIBYANS AND MALTA'S INCREASINGLY ANTI-ISRAELI OFFICIAL STANCE. BENYACOV DOES NOT ENVY HIS SUCCESSOR, FOR IF MINTOFF WINS THE COMING ENGEREL ELECTION (AND BENYACOV EXPECTS HIM TO DO SO), HE BELIEVES THAT THE OUTLOOK CAN ONLY BE FOR A FURTHER DETERIORATION IN ISRAELI-MALTESE RELATIONS AS MINTOFF MOVES EVEN CLOSER TO THE LIBYAN AND PLO CAMP. SMITH

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